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INFO RUEHTH/AMEMBASSY ATHENS 9459
RUEHIT/AMCONSUL ISTANBUL 5344
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RUEHBS/AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS 7106
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SUBJECT: ANKARA MEDIA REACTION REPORT
FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 6, 2009

In Today's Papers

Foxman: 'Davos Wounds will Heal in Time'
Leftist-nationalist Cumhuriyet carries an on-the-phone interview with the Anti-Defamation League (ADL) chairman Abraham Foxman. On Prime Minister Erdogan's storming out of a panel meeting with President Peres in Davos, Foxman said from time to time, friends have disagreements. "The Jewish community has nothing to do with the bombardment of Gaza. The harshness of Erdogan's remarks shocked both the Jewish community and Israel. Such a tough reaction should not have come from the Turkish leader. In fact, some who don't like the Turkish-Israeli and Jewish-Muslim friendship try to stir trouble," emphasized Foxman. He noted the Turkish leadership realized that Erdogan's remarks "went too far," and several figures including the Prime Minister and Foreign Minister have begun talking about the importance of bilateral ties. He also said the Davos "outburst" inflicted unexpected wounds, but that this would be "healed in time." On the Armenian Genocide Resolution expected to be taken to US Congress under the new administration, Foxman said, "Some claim we, with an aim to punish the Turks, will not support Turkey this time. We do not punish. Some in Turkey want to damage the ties between us; we must be very careful."

Prosecutor Initiates Genocide Investigation Against Israeli Officials

Mainstream Hurriyet reports that Ankara prosecutor's office has initiated an investigation against Israeli officials for committing genocide in Gaza against the Palestinians. The investigation was initiated after a complaint was filed by "Mazlum-Der Association" for human rights and solidarity for the oppressed. The paper notes that this is the first time the prosecutor has initiated an investigation for crimes against humanity under international treaties.

Turkish Intellectuals Initiate a Signature Campaign Against Anti-Semitism

Mainstream Sabah reports that 250 intellectuals have begun a signature campaign against growing anti-Semitism in Turkey. In their statement, the intellectuals urged Israel to stop its violence in Gaza and asked all Turkish civilian and official organizations to

stop supporting anti-Semitism in Turkey.

Editorial Commentary on Turkey/Israel/Hamas

Mumtazer Turkone wrote in Islamist oriented Zaman: "Turkey has gained an enormous popularity among Arab nations. This is the very time for Turkey to act as a democracy model and use the potential influence for democracy in the region."

Ece Temelkuran wrote in mainstream Milliyet: "There is talk about the 'Davos spirit' as a remedy for Middle East nations. Given AKP's intolerance to different views and efforts to silence political criticism inside Turkey, it is hard to believe that the mastermind of the 'Davos spirit' can bring any good to the region."

Bagis: 'Turkish Troops Released in 2003 after Erdogan Called VP Cheney'

Media outlets report Turkey's chief EU negotiator Egemen Bagis said the Turkish special force members detained in 2003 by US forces in Suleymaniye in northern Iraq were released after the intervention of Prime Minister Erdogan. Following a visit on Thursday to the AKP provincial branch in Izmir, Bagis told reporters that Erdogan phoned VP Dick Cheney and asked the Turkish soldiers be released immediately, saying that as a person who served a prison sentence, he knew about the conditions of detention. Papers comment Bagis' statement came in response to opposition CHP leader Deniz Baykal's criticism of Erdogan that unlike his walkout in Davos, the PM had remained silent to the detention of Turkish soldiers in 2003.

Employers to Erdogan: 'We're Dying, Help Us'

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Leftist-nationalist Cumhuriyet reports Turkish employers' and laborers' union representatives lobbied for a rescue package to save the faltering economy at Thursday's meeting of the Economic and Social Council, chaired by Prime Minister Erdogan. Turkey's influential employers' union federation TISK chair Tugrul Kutadgobilik complained to the PM that his government "could not manage the crisis." "The situation has become intolerable. It was we who grew this economy, and we will continue doing so after the crisis. We are waiting to see economic rescue packages announced by the government. We're dying, please help us," stated Kutadgobilik. After the meeting, a bill of economic support measures was sent to the parliament for approval, says Cumhuriyet.

DTP's Tugluk Sentenced to 18 months for PKK Propaganda
Mainstreams Sabah and Milliyet report that DTP Diyarbakir deputy Aysel Tugluk was sentenced to 18 months in prison for referring to PKK members as "heroes" in a speech in 2006. Tugluk said "I instructed my lawyers to appeal. I am acting in the name of democracy and peaceful settlement of the Kurdish issue. This penalty shows that there is no change in the state's approach, official ideology and tyranny regarding the Kurdish issue. I am ready to serve 50 years in jail if this would help to solve the Kurdish issue. The current approach of the government will not help resolve the Kurdish issue. Meanwhile, the trial of DTP Istanbul deputy Sebahat Tuncel started in the Istanbul 10th heavy penalty court for being a member of the terrorist organization. The prosecutor demanded 7.5 to 15 years prison sentence for Tuncel.

Turkey to Send Frigates off Somalia Coast to Counter Piracy
Mainstream Hurriyet reports the ruling AKP government submitted to parliament a motion for the deployment of Turkish navy vessels off the Somali coast and in the Gulf of Aden for a one-year period, in a move to back international efforts to fight piracy. Giresun frigate will be the first ship to be sent to the region. According to the motion, 15 ships affiliated with Turkey with over 300 crew including 37 Turks have been hijacked. "The threat to our commercial vessels and our seamen has reached a dimension where it negatively affects our country's commercial and economic interests," says the motion.

Report: Situation of Turkish Women in Politics, Societal Life
'Shameful'

Under a headline, "The Shameful Picture," liberal Radikal carries a report by the General Directorate for the Status of Women, which

shows 5.7 million women were "illiterate" in Turkey. Women constitute a mere six percent of the officials in the decision-making mechanisms -- the related figure in the US is 46 percent, and in Russia 39 percent. Women represent only 9 percent of the members of the Turkish parliament, while the related figure is 47 percent in Sweden and 36 percent in Spain. Women in Turkey face job discrimination, and become the first victims of economic troubles that force companies to cut jobs. Only 22.2 percent of Turkish women are employed, while the same figure for the first 15 EU members is calculated as 59.7 percent. Sixty-four percent of the employed women have no social security or job guarantees. The report also says 39 percent of Turkish women believe they deserve to be beaten by their husbands for burning the dinner, talking back, mispending money, neglecting their children or refusing to have sex.

TV News (CNN Turk)

Domestic

- Turkey's main opposition party CHP is divided by concerns over party leader Deniz Baykal's decision that CHP would open community centers teaching the Koran.
- On Friday, Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas will travel to Ankara to meet President Abdullah Gul and PM Erdogan.

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- The European Court of Human Rights rules Turkey must pay compensation to high school students who were imprisoned as suspected PKK members in Diyarbakir eight years ago.
- CHP claims the ruling AKP distributes household goods in Tunceli to 'bribe' voters before the municipality elections. The goods distributed in Tunceli have been purchased from two companies which have ties to the AKP.

World

- Prime Minister Nuri Maliki's party scores a sweeping victory over rival Shiite Muslim groups in Iraqi provincial elections.
 - Egyptian authorities say a senior Hamas official has been prevented from crossing back into Gaza with millions of dollars in cash.
 - Swedish police arrest two protesters after they hurl a shoe and books at Israel's ambassador while he was addressing a university seminar in Stockholm.
 - Secretary of State Hillary Clinton will visit Japan, Indonesia, South Korea and China from February 15-22.
- JEFFREY